Air Force Space Command Establishes First Space Battlelab

New Space Battlelab Will Employ Modeling and Simulation in an Operational Environment

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FALCON AFB, COLO. A new era in warfighting was born here June 30 with the activation of the Space Battlelab, an organization dedicated to innovative space operations and concepts.

The flag of one of the Air Force's newest organizations was unfurled at the activation ceremony that was observed by Gen. Howell M. Estes III, Commander in Chief of North American Aerospace Defense Command, U.S. Space Command, and Commander of Air Force Space Command; and Col. Jeff Wenzel, the battlelab's commander.

"The Space Battlelab will be developing and examining new ways to make space an integral part, not only of what our operational warfighters do, but our logisticians, our communicators, our intelligence agencies, and eventually the American public at large," said Estes. Citing the Global Positioning System as an example, Estes said the concepts the Space Battlelab develops may result in spin-off technologies that will have application to the everyday lives of all American citizens, long after the concepts begin to serve the military's needs.

The post-Cold War environment created several new realities for the military, realities this battlelab was created to address. Foremost among those realities was the fact that Defense Department budgets and personnel numbers were significantly reduced. Combined with this was the rapid advancement

of technology development and the challenges this advancement poses for upgrading military capabilities. And finally, commercial business ventures have now replaced the military as drivers of many high-technology markets.

"The nature of the combat environment today is changing," said Wenzel. "Technology is moving faster than it ever has before. We don't know if we're applying technology that our country develops to our warfighting the way that we could or should." The military is having to fight in new, nontraditional environments such as Somalia, Bosnia, and Haiti.

"So we need to be able to change and do things differently than the way we've done them before," said Wenzel. The Space Battlelab facilitates ideas and innovation, the kind of innovation that led to many of the Air Force's historical successes.

Wenzel said the battlelab is not a "laboratory," in the classic sense. There are no test tubes, beakers or Bunsen burners. "I'd call us an innovation cell," he said.

"As we stand here today, anticipating the turn of the century, on the brink of an evolving air and space force to a space and air force, activating the first battlelab for space, we are indeed living in interesting times," said Estes. In fact, Estes said, many historic parallels exist between the birth of aviation and the birth of the space battlelab. The Wright brothers had a dream, a concept which became a reality and the foundation for the U.S. Air Force.

"These men were visionaries, visionaries whose concepts resulted in technological development which changed the course of human events," Estes said. "The need for our air and space forces are evolving and moving forward into the future at a very, very fast pace."

The Space Battlelab is one of six battlelabs founded by the Air Force whose missions are to advance the Air Force Core Competencies of: Air and Space Superiority, Global Attack, Precision Engagement, Information Superiority, Rapid Global Mobility, and Agile Combat Support. The battlelabs will rely on field innovation to identify ways to advance these core competencies.

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"We are an air and space force that embraces change in technology, and the Space Battlelab will lead the way in innovations that haven't been considered yet," said Estes. The Space Battlelab will be small and will focus on innovation for space-related Air Force Operations. It will employ field ingenuity, modeling and simulation, and existing capabilities in an operational environment in order to accomplish the Air Force mission. "The Space Battlelab offers our command and the air and space forces at large the opportunity to consider concepts that will not only further integrate space into our land, sea and air forces, but go beyond traditional methods of power protection, and most importantly, further develop space itself," Estes said.

The Space Battlelab will report directly to the Space Warfare Center here, another cutting-edge organization dedicated to marrying space-based capabilities with warfighter needs.

The battlelab will develop concepts and rapidly evaluate their potential. "We're going to take ideas from all over the Air Force and Space Command," said Wenzel. He adds that when the battlelab gets an idea that will help the Air Force execute a combat mission more efficiently, the concept will be tested and evaluated. "And then we'll run with it."

To illustrate the importance of these battlelabs, successfully demonstrated battlelab initiatives may result in changes to Air Force doctrine, new statements of combat mission needs, new Air Force requirements, reprogramming of funds, demonstrations of advanced technology concepts, or changes to ongoing or future acquisitions.

"This, of course, is the 50th anniversary year of our Air Force. And we can now see the beginnings of the space and air force of the future," said Estes. "As we embark on the next 50 years, the Space Battlelab will play a pivotal role in developing and evaluating concepts that will chart the future of military space."

The other five battlelabs are the Air Expeditionary Force Battlelab at Mountain Home AFB, Idaho; Battle Management Battlelab at Hurlburt Field, Fla.; Unmanned Air Vehicle Battlelab at Eglin AFB, Fla.; Force Protection Battlelab at Lackland AFB, Texas; and the Information Warfare Battlelab at Kelly AFB, Texas. All six battlelabs were operational by July 1, 1997.

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